

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 STR-04 FCC-01 COME-00

PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 TRSE-00 ITC-01 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 SP-02 SS-15 NSC-05 /076 W

-----026579 212351Z /66

P 212334Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4211

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL MONTREAL

ALL OTHER AMCONSULS CANADA POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 06630

USMTN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETEL, ETRD, SCUL, PINT, CA

SUBJECT: CRTC REPORT OF INQUIRY INTO CBC

REF: OTTAWA A-215, JULY 14, A-221, JULY 21

1. PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU TABLED REPORT IN HOUSE OF COMMONS JULY 20 BY CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (CRTC) WHICH IS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION. COMMITTEE, HEADED BY CRTC CHAIRMAN BOYLE, FOUND CBC DEFICIENT IN THREE MAJOR AREAS INVOLVING ITS STATUTORY MANDATE:

-- EXCESSIVE CENTRALIZATION IN TORONTO AND MONTREAL HAS CAUSED CBC TO CONCENTRATE ON EVENTS IN THOSE AREAS WHILE NEGLECTING SPECIAL NEEDS OF OTHER GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS;

-- THE COMPLETE SEPARATION OF ENGLISH AND FRENCH NETWORKS HAS LED TO FAILURE TO CONTRIBUTE TO "FLOW AND EXCHANGE OF CULTURAL AND REGIONAL INFORMATION AND ENTERTAINMENT."

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-- HEAVY DEPENDENCE ON AMERICAN PROGRAMMING HAS LED ENGLISH CBC NETWORK TO BECOME "SELF-IMPRISONED" BY NORTH AMERICAN TELEVISION PATTERN AND HAS FAILED TO PROVIDE FOR CONTINUING EXPRESSION OF CANADIAN IDENTITY.

REPORT NOTES THAT LESS RELIANCE ON U.S. PROGRAMS AND LESS

EXCLUSIVE USE OF INTERNAL RESOURCES WOULD FACILITATE INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ENGLISH AND FRENCH CANADIANS. REPORT CHARGES CBC HAS ISOLATED ITSELF FROM THE PUBLIC AND PARLIAMENT AND URGES THAT CBC CORRECT ITS FAILURE TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE COMMUNICATIONS AMONG VARIOUS GROUPS AND REGIONS IN CANADA AS PREREQUISITE FOR REGAINING CONFIDENTIAL

THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND POLITICIANS.

2. RATHER THAN CALLING FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A ROYAL COMMISSION OR TASK FORCE, AS MOST OBSERVERS EXPECTED, THE COMMITTEE SIMPLY RECOMMENDED THAT CBC BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO CORRECT ITS "AWKWARD AND UNPRODUCTIVE" ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND TO CREATE A FOCAL POINT FOR AN INTEGRATED CULTURAL POLICY WHICH SHOULD BE IN PLACE BY 1978 WHEN CRTC HOLDS ITS HEARINGS ON RENEWAL OF LICENSES EXPIRING IN 1979. IN REJECTING ANY TYPE OF PUBLIC INQUIRY, THE REPORT STATED THAT WHILE A REVIEW MAY BE NECESSARY, THE COMMISSION FELT THAT THERE IS NEITHER WILL NOR READINESS TO GIVE PRIORITY TO THESE PROBLEMS NOR TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGES THAT MIGHT RESULT FROM A MAJOR INQUIRY.

3. ALL MEDIA HAVE, UNDERSTANDABLY, GIVEN CONCENTRATED ATTENTION TO REPORT AND GENERALLY HAVE FOCUSED ON THREE CONFIDENTIAL

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POINTS OUTLINED ABOVE. SOME COMMENTATORS HAVE ALSO NOTED THAT ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF INQUIRY AND CHARGE TO COMMISSION WAS TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGATIONS OF SEPARATIST BIAS BUT THAT REPORT HAS LITTLE TO SAY DIRECTLY ON THIS ISSUE. RATHER THAN COMMENTING ON BIAS, IT IMPLIES THAT SEPARATISM ALREADY EXISTS IN MEDIA AND THAT INSTEAD OF AIDING UNDERSTANDING, THIS SITUATION MAKES INCREASED NATIONAL UNITY MORE DIFFICULT. COPIES OF REPORT ARE BEING FORWARDED TO EUR/CAN, EB/TT/TD AND FCC (JOHNSON).

4. COMMENT: OUR PRELIMINARY REACTION IS THAT REPORT IS NOT A STRONG DOCUMENT FOR POLICY FORMULATION AND CONTAINS EXTREME LANGUAGE NOT LIKELY TO STAND UP WELL; E.G., CHARGING THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA ARE "BIASED TO THE POINT OF SUBVERSIVENESS," SCHIZOPHRENIC, ETC. NONETHELESS, WE ARE CONCERNED THAT RECOMMENDATIONS INTENDED TO PRESSURE CANADIAN TELEVISION INTO MAJOR PROGRAMMING CHANGES IN THE CONTEXT OF LICENSE RENEWAL HEARINGS CAN BE USED BY NATIONALISTS -- AND NARROWER INTEREST GROUPS -- TO SEEK TO LIMIT IMPORTS OF U.S. TELEVISION PROGRAMS. OUR CONCERN IS BASED NOT ONLY ON CRTC INQUIRY BUT ALSO ON INDICATIONS THAT PROHIBITIVE TAXATION IS BEING CONSIDERED IN

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AS MEANS TO RESTRICT IMPORTS
OF U.S. TELEVISION PROGRAMS AND TO ENCOURAGE CANADIAN
PRODUCTION. THESE INDICATIONS ARE REPORTED IN DETAIL IN
EMBASSY'S A-221.

5. RECOMMENDATION: WHILE WE DO NOT NEED TO CONFRONT THIS
ISSUE IMMEDIATELY, WE RECOMMEND THAT WASHINGTON AGENCIES
BEGIN NOW TO ANALYZE WHAT THE POTENTIAL DAMAGE TO U.S.
COMMERCIAL INTERESTS MIGHT BE AND TO RECONSIDER HOW WE
MIGHT RESPOND TO A PROHIBITIVE TAX APPROACH. ENDERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMMITTEES, TELEVISION BROADCASTING, RADIO BROADCASTING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 21-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977OTTAWA06630
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770260-0508
Format: TEL
From: OTTAWA USMTN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770733/aaaabcmv.tel
Line Count: 125
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a3dfea65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 OTTAWA A-215
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1790777
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CRTC REPORT OF INQUIRY INTO CBC
TAGS: ETEL, ETRD, SCUL, PINT, CA, CRTC
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a3dfea65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009